The Status of Descendants of the Baekje Kingdom during Emperor Kanmu’s Reign

Ellen Van Goethem

Abstract

This article examines the status of kinship groups claiming to be of Baekje descent during the reign of the Japanese Emperor Kanmu (b.737, r.781-806). Being a maternal descendant of the Baekje royal house himself, Kanmu extended some unprecedented favours to various immigrant clans. However, the bestowed rewards and privileges varied greatly depending on the individual family. In an attempt to provide an explanation for this difference in treatment, the role of the immigrant clans, or members thereof, is first discussed in terms of Kanmu’s philosophical beliefs, his bureaucracy, and his Hinder Palace. Then, the difference in status between the immigrant kinship groups is analyzed, and a possible explanation for the difference in treatment is suggested.

Keywords: ancient Japan, Yamato, Kudara, Sugano, Koma, hereditary title, konikishi, naturalization, assimilation

Kanmu’s Baekje Origins

As a descendant of the Tenji line, the non-ruling branch of the Japanese imperial family since the Jinshin war of 672, nothing during Kanmu’s youth indicated that one day he would become sovereign. However, when the ruling Empress Shōtoku passed away in 770, no suitable heirs were found in the Tenmu line, and Prince Shirakabe, a grandson of Great King Tenji, assumed the throne as Emperor Kōnin. Most likely, the enthronement of the 61-year-old Kōnin was a transitional measure until his 9-year-old son, Imperial Prince Osabe, was old enough to rule. Despite his young age, Osabe was favoured above all other children of Kōnin and appointed crown prince because his mother was an imperial princess of the Tenmu line, and thus Osabe represented the merging of the two imperial lineages (see fig. 1).

It was not until 773, after Osabe and his mother were accused of sorcery and removed from the capital that Yamabe, the later Emperor Kanmu, was appointed crown prince. Even at this point, Yamabe's selection was met with opposition. Although he was probably the eldest legitimate son, his father and some government officials originally proposed other members of the imperial family as heir to the throne. It is now commonly accepted that Yamabe was initially left out of consideration for the position of heir apparent due to his maternal descent.

As was customary for aristocratic males in eighth-century Japan, Yamabe’s father had several consorts and concubines, and most of these women outranked Yamabe’s mother, Takano no ason Niigasa. Until the mid-770s, Niigasa’s surname and hereditary title (kabane) had been Yamato no fuhito. Various sources testify to the fact that

1. Members of the imperial family descending from Great King Tenji. On the usage of “Great King” (ökimi) rather than “Emperor” (tennō) for Japan’s pre-8th century rulers, see Piggott (1997).
2. Members of the imperial family descending from Great King Tenmu.
4. Niigasa and her father Yamato no fuhito Ototsugu received the name Takano no ason during the reign of Kōnin. Although no mention is made of this bestowment.

Ellen Van Goethem is presently a visiting scholar at Ritsumeikan University. She obtained her Ph.D. in Oriental Languages and Cultures from Ghent University, Belgium. Her publications include “Influence of Chinese Philosophical Thought on the Construction of Nagaokakyō” (2006). E-mail: evgoethem@gmail.com.
this kinship group claimed descent from the royal house of Baekje. Already in 505, this bond between the Yamato family and Baekje royalty was mentioned in the Nihon shoki (The Chronicles of Japan):5

The King of Baekje [Muryeong] sent Lord Sa-a. He eventually had a son named Lord Beopsa. He was the ancestor of the Kimi of Yamato.6

Almost three centuries later, Niigasa’s biography as recorded in the Shoku nihongi (Chronicles of Japan, Continued) also stresses her family’s relationship with the Baekje royal family since the entries around the time of her death in 790 state that her ancestors were the “descendants of Crown Prince Sunta, son of King Muryeong.”7 Furthermore, according to the early ninth-century Shinsen shōjiroku (A Record of Titles and Surnames Newly Selected), a genealogy of the clans inhabiting Helan and the Five Inner Provinces, the Yamato family were “the offspring of King Muryeong, a descendant in the 18th generation of King Dongmyeong of the kingdom of Baekje.”8

The fact that both historical records refer to Dongmyeong as the ancestor of the Baekje kings shows that their compilers had some understanding of Korean history and mythology. Muryeong was the 25th king of Baekje and, indeed, a descendant in the 18th generation when counted from Dongmyeong. However, Dongmyeong was not a Baekje sovereign; he has to be identified with Ko Jumong or King Dongmyeong of the Korean kingdom of Goguryeo. He was the father of Onjo, who according to the Samguk sagi (Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms) was the actual founder of Baekje.9

in the court annals of that era, Niigasa was referred to as Takano no ason for the first time in 778. Shoku nihongi, Hōki 9/1/29. It is likely that she was given this name around the time of Yamabe’s appointment to crown prince.

5. Nihon shoki, Muretsu tennō 7/summer, 4th month.
7. Shoku nihongi, Enryaku (hereafter abbreviated as E) 8 following year/1/15; Shoku nihongi, E 9/12/1.
Kanmu also seems to have been deeply aware of his mother's roots and when her posthumous name was decided upon, the foundation myth of Goguryeo as recorded in the Samguk sagi, in which reference is made to the solar origins of the royal families of Goguryeo and Baekje, was taken into consideration.10 “Her Highness, Princess Child of the Sun, Heavenly Ruler” (天高知日之子授受) clearly refers to the fact that, as a descendant of Domon, Niigasa was a “child of the sun.” One day later, another reference is made to the tale of Dongmyeong's birth as preserved in Korean records as it is stated that he was born from a daughter of a river god who had been impregnated by the sun.12

Once enthroned, this maternal consanguinity with the royal house of the former Baekje kingdom caused Kanmu to rely on members of immigrant kinship groups for various reasons and purposes, thus raising their political and social importance.

**Philosophical Beliefs**

A first element in terms of Kanmu’s actions towards immigrant clans are his philosophical beliefs and the importance of the Kudara no konikishi family in this matter. Possibly owing to his partial descent from Baekje immigrants, Kanmu was deeply affected by such continental concepts as the Mandate of Heaven (cheonmyeong), yin-yang, and the Five Elements. Because his father's succession to the throne meant a shift back towards the Tenji line of sovereigns, Kanmu firmly believed his rule marked the accession of a new dynasty. Thus, in line with the above-mentioned philosophical concepts, the establishment of a new capital (Nagaokakyo) was required, and Kanmu twice observed a sacrifice to the Lord on High (koten jotei; ch.: haotian shangdi) to legitimate his rule.13 These ceremonies took place in Katano, Kawachi province, an area generally accepted as Kanmu’s favourite hunting field,14 and the homeland of the Kudara no Konikishi, a family whose members Kanmu considered to be his “maternal relatives.”15

Like the Yamato clan, the Kudara no Konikishi traced their genealogy back to the kingdom of Baekje. The Shinsen shojiroku states that they were the descendants of King Uija, the 31st king of Baekje.16 According to the Nihon shoki, Uija had sent his son, Prince Pung, as a “hostage” to Japan in 631.17 When Uija surrendered to the Tang armies in 660 and was brought to China as a prisoner, Pung returned to the Korean peninsula with, among others, Abe no omi Hirafu, a Japanese navy general. There they joined forces with

10. Various versions of the foundation myth exist and can be found in translation in Grayson (2001, 63-88). An article focusing on references to the sun in the Goguryeo foundation myth is Gardiner’s (1982).
11. Shoku nihongi, E 8 following year/1/14.
12. Shoku nihongi, E 8 following year/1/15.
13. Shoku nihongi, E 4/11/10; E 6/11/5. Since two references are made to the winter solstice, and the text of the incantations uttered during the second ceremony is to a large extent identical to the Datang jiaosilu (Records of the Suburban Sacrifice of the Great Tang), it is believed that Kanmu carried out the suburban round altar sacrifice (koshi; ch.: jiaosi). This sacrifice was a Chinese Confucian ritual intended to legitimize the position and actions of an emperor. Datang jiaosilu, 4. Takikawa (1967, 484-495) provides a comparison of the proclamations of the Tang, Kanmu, and emperor Montoku, who also carried out the ceremony in 856. Nihon montoku tenno itsuroku, Saikyo 3/11/22-25.
15. Shoku nihongi, E 9/2/27. To explain Kanmu’s claim that they were his maternal relatives, Tsunoda (1976, 38-39) has suggested that a daughter of Kudara no Shosei may have married someone of the Yamato family and that their son was Yamato no Ototsugu, Kanmu’s maternal grandfather (see fig. 2). However, it is also possible that Kanmu was merely referring to the fact that Uija was a descendant of Muryeong and that as such the Yamato and Kudara families were related. For a survey of other explanations, see Tanaka (1997, 82-83) and Otsubo (2003, 129-131).
17. Nihon shoki, Jomei tennou 3/3/1. In fact, because Uija did not succeed to the throne until 641, Pung was probably sent by King Mu, Uija’s father. Although the Chinese character ᵇ  i.e. “hostage” or “pawn” is used in the court records, Song (2006) has suggested that Pung and his relatives came to Japan following the first envoy to the Tang (kentoshi) since their experience in diplomacy would be useful for the Japanese when dealing with the Tang empire and the Silla kingdom.
Boksin, another member of the Baekje royal family, and the Buddhist monk Dochim in an attempt to restore the Baekje kingdom. However, their plan failed and one of Pung’s brothers, known in Japan as Zenkō, fled to Japan where he and his people were given land in 664.

Several elements indicate that Zenkō’s clan was certainly held in high esteem by the central government in the late seventh century. For example, when Zenkō’s son, Shōsei, passed away in 674, his death was recorded in the official records with the verb 惣 (mimakaru), a term usually reserved for high-ranking aristocrats, and he was posthumously bestowed the rank of Lesser Purple (shōshi), the 6th highest rank within the 26-grade cap rank system established in 664. Furthermore, during the reign of Empress Jito, Zenkō was given the surname and hereditary title of Kudara no Konikishi and the family was included in the Japanese bureaucratic system.

Over the following decades, the family continued to prosper, and during the mid-eighth century, the clan’s most prominent male member was Kudara no Konikishi Kyōfuku, Shōsei’s grandson. Kyōfuku was greatly favoured by Emperor Shōmu because of his contribution to the completion of the Great Buddha of the Todaiji temple. At the beginning of 749, a few months before the casting of this huge statue of Rushana Buddha was completed, gold was discovered in the Ōda district of Mutsu province, at that time administered by Kyōfuku. Consequently, Kyōfuku offered 900 両 (approximately 12.5 kg) of this gold to the throne. The discovery was reported to the major shrines in the realm and during a ceremony at Todaiji, Shōmu had his Minister of the Left read the following statement:
Irrespective of whether or not these two had a love affair, Kanmu greatly favoured Myōshin and frequently visited her husband's residences. As a result, several favours and rewards were extended to Myōshin and her relatives. When Kanmu went on a hunting trip in Katano in late 783, the district was exempted from paying that year's rice-paddy taxes (denso); the Kudaradera, the clan temple of the Kudara family, received part of the tax grain (shōzei) of two provinces; and several members of the family were granted court ranks. On that occasion, Myōshin received the highest awarded rank.27 The following month, Myōshin's court rank was raised again to Senior Fourth Rank Upper Grade. 28 In 787, when Kanmu visited another villa of Tsugutada in the vicinity of the Nagaoka capital, he bestowed the Junior Third Rank upon Myōshin and, in 794, when it was decided that a new capital (Heian) would be built in Uda, 11,000 sheaves of rice were given to Myōshin and fourteen other women for the construction of new residences.29

Around her husband's death in 796, Myōshin's influence at court was extended even further as she was appointed director of the Palace Retainers' Office (naishi no kami), the principal administrative office of the Hinder Palace. 30 Apparently, she concurrently held the post of director of the Table Office (kashiwade no kami).31 In 797, Myōshin again received an extraordinary favour when she was granted an area of no less than 77 chō (approximately 76.3 ha) in Noto province. 32 And, two years later, she was awarded the Senior Third Rank one day before Kanmu again journeyed to the Katano district.33

In the meantime, Kanmu also bestowed an unprecedented and extraordinary favour on the entire Kudara no Konikishi clan. In 797, Kanmu greatly favoured Myōshin and frequently visited her husband's residences. As a result, several favours and rewards were extended to Myōshin and her relatives. When Kanmu went on a hunting trip in Katano in late 783, the district was exempted from paying that year's rice-paddy taxes (denso); the Kudaradera, the clan temple of the Kudara family, received part of the tax grain (shōzei) of two provinces; and several members of the family were granted court ranks. On that occasion, Myōshin received the highest awarded rank.27 The following month, Myōshin's court rank was raised again to Senior Fourth Rank Upper Grade. 28 In 787, when Kanmu visited another villa of Tsugutada in the vicinity of the Nagaoka capital, he bestowed the Junior Third Rank upon Myōshin and, in 794, when it was decided that a new capital (Heian) would be built in Uda, 11,000 sheaves of rice were given to Myōshin and fourteen other women for the construction of new residences.29

Around her husband's death in 796, Myōshin's influence at court was extended even further as she was appointed director of the Palace Retainers' Office (naishi no kami), the principal administrative office of the Hinder Palace. 30 Apparently, she concurrently held the post of director of the Table Office (kashiwade no kami).31 In 797, Myōshin again received an extraordinary favour when she was granted an area of no less than 77 chō (approximately 76.3 ha) in Noto province. 32 And, two years later, she was awarded the Senior Third Rank one day before Kanmu again journeyed to the Katano district.33

In the meantime, Kanmu also bestowed an unprecedented and extraordinary favour on the entire Kudara no Konikishi clan. In 797,
he issued a supplementary law (kyaku) stipulating that the clan was forever exempted from conscripted labour in the state-run corvée system.34

It is hard to imagine that all these favours and promotions in court rank were awarded purely as the result of a supposed love affair between Kanmu and Myōshin. Thus, the answer must be sought elsewhere, which brings our argument back to Kanmu’s philosophical beliefs.

Throughout his reign, Kanmu seems to have travelled to Katano at least once a year.35 With the exception of two trips in 795 and 799, all the imperial journeys took place around the time of the winter solstice. Although the records mostly specify that Kanmu went to Katano on a hunting trip and wintertime was undeniably the ideal season for falcon hunting, it is unlikely that this was the sole purpose of the journeys. On at least four occasions, members of the Kudara no Konikishi family were generously rewarded with fairly high ranks and other benefits, making it difficult to interpret this gesture simply and solely as a sign of appreciation for their hospitality. This is reinforced by the fact that Kanmu journeyed extensively to other places throughout his reign and, although these trips were frequently followed by banquets, the rewards bestowed on individual people were usually limited.

34. Supplementary law dated E 16/5/28, preserved in Ruijū sandai kyaku 17 (1965, 516) and Ryō no shūge (Collected Commentaries on the Administrative Codes) 13, Buyakuryō, 409. For a detailed analysis of this law, see Tanaka (1994) and Ōtsubo (2003, 150-151).

35. The historical records contain references to these journeys in the following entries: Shoku nihongi, E 2/10/14-18, E 2/10/16, E 3/11/1, E 4/11/10, E 6/10/17-20, E 6/10/20, E 6/11/15, E 10/10/10-13, E 10/10/12; Ruijū kokushi E 11/9/28, E 12/11/10, E 13/9/22, E 13/10/13, E 14/3/27; Nihon kiyaku, E 14/10/16-22, E 16/10/8; Nihon kōki, E 18/2/8, E 19/10/17-25, E 21/10/9-15, 18/10/9. Missing years can easily be accounted for. In 786, it was probably inappropriate to make an imperial journey because Kanmu’s father received his final resting place, and in 789, Niigasa’s illness and death may have prevented a trip (Shoku nihongi, E 5/10/28, E 8/12/23, E 8/12/28). The absence of references to Katano at the end of Kanmu’s reign may be explained by the fact that parts of the Nihon kōki (Latter Chronicles of Japan) are lost.

In all likelihood, the rewards given to the various members of the Kudara no konikishi family were connected to rituals carried out on the winter solstice. During his first hunting trip to Katano in 783, Kanmu may have inspected the area for the erection of a round mound to hold the previously mentioned sacrifice to the Lord on High. Furthermore, it is clear from the historical records that in 787 Myōshin’s husband, Tsugutada, carried out the ritual in Kanmu’s name. It is not surprising that an emperor who was deeply aware of his consanguinity with the royal house of Baekje selected the homeland of an immigrant kinship group from that same kingdom in which to construct a round mound, since the custom was practiced in Baekje, too, and the proceedings of the ritual itself might even have been based upon a version of the ritual carried out by the Baekje kings.36

**Government Administration**

A second element requiring attention in order to establish the status of immigrant clans is the role their members played in the bureaucratic system.

As far as the Kudara no Konikishi are concerned, they retained their influence to a certain extent after Kanmu’s enthronement due to their intermarriage with the Southern Fujiwara. However, the Kudara could only aspire to provincial and mid-level appointments, and none of the clan’s male members attained Kyōfuku’s Junior Third Rank.37

Much more significant was the fact that under Kanmu some members of other immigrant clans rose to top level positions within

36. Hayashi (1974). Although the exact site of the ceremony is unknown, all the suggested locations lie close to Mt. Katano in present Osaka prefecture. For a list of possible locations, see Fukunaga et al. (1987, 130-131) and Takahashi (1991, 112-117).

37. The highest rank achieved by a Kudara during Kanmu’s reign was that of Senior Fourth Rank Lower Grade, held by Kudara no Konikishi Genkyō. Nihon kōki, E 18/9/10. For a full list of all the Kudara no Konikishi promoted in rank and appointed to office during Kanmu’s reign, see Ōtsubo (2003, 134-143).
was awarded the Junior Third Rank. In mid-799 he became Mediate Affairs Minister (nakatsukasa no kami), upon which we are informed that he also held the office of governor of Sagami province (Sagami no kami).

These numerous appointments create the impression that Iemaro was an able politician whose advice and experience were greatly appreciated. However, his biography as preserved in the Nihon koki seems to suggest the opposite:

He was unsophisticated and lacked talent and education. Because he was a maternal relative of the emperor, he [enjoyed] special preference and promotion. [The fact] that people from a foreign [clan] enter [the ranks of] the highest officials, originates here. One can say his rank was too [high] and his true merit was insufficient. Although he held highly respected offices, he did not shy away from the vulgarity of meeting with old friends.

Although the biographies recorded in the Nihon koki tend to be “unrelentingly critical,” it is possible that the compilers of this record, members of the Fujiwara family, one of the families traditionally represented in the State Council, were envious of Iemaro’s achievements and attempted to discredit him. Another possible explanation could be the fact that Kanmu, being a strong ruler, preferred people who could be easily dominated in top-level positions, thus keeping most power for himself.

At the beginning of 805, another member of a clan claiming Baekje descent was given a seat on the State Council when the aged and ill Kanmu announced the appointment of Sugano no ason Mamichi to the office of imperial advisor.

Although the biographies recorded in the Nihon koki tend to be “unrelentingly critical,” it is possible that the compilers of this record, members of the Fujiwara family, one of the families traditionally represented in the State Council, were envious of Iemaro’s achievements and attempted to discredit him. Another possible explanation could be the fact that Kanmu, being a strong ruler, preferred people who could be easily dominated in top-level positions, thus keeping most power for himself.

At the beginning of 805, another member of a clan claiming Baekje descent was given a seat on the State Council when the aged and ill Kanmu announced the appointment of Sugano no ason Mamichi to the office of imperial advisor. Before 790, Mamichi held the surname and hereditary title of Tsu no Muraji. He thus belonged...
to a kinship group that claimed to be in the lineage of King Geungsu, the 14th king of Baekje. Although Mamichi served as director of the Left Palace Guards (saэji no kami) and of the Military Guards’ Headquarters of the Left (sahyое no kami) early in his political career, Kanmu probably held Mamichi in high esteem because of his scholarly abilities. In 785, Mamichi became scholar in Crown Prince Ate’s Eastern Palace Agency (тогү gakushi) and combined this appointment with several other offices such as that of associate director and, later, director of the Manuscripts and Books Bureau (zusho no suke and zusho no kami). In addition, Mamichi was involved in writing the final draft of the Shoku nihongi, which was presented to Kanmu in 797. He also headed the Board of Discharge Examiners (кагейши), and as such, he was responsible for the compilation of the Enryaku kотай (Enryaku Regulations on the Transfer of Office) along with Fujiwara no ason Uchimaro.

Although not of Baekje descent, two other men belonging to an immigrant kinship group deserve to be mentioned in this context since they too held high government posts during Kanmu’s reign.

The first is extra-codal imperial advisor Koma no ason Fukushin. Fukushin’s original surname and hereditary title was Sena no kimi. His biography as recorded in the Shoku nihongi claims he was a descendant of a man who fled from the Korean kingdom of Goguryeo to Japan after Tang General Li Chi occupied Pyeongyang in 668. In fact, Fukushin had been appointed extra-codal imperial advisor by Shотoku in 765 and had served in this function ever since. By the time Kanmu came to the throne, Fukushin was already in his seventies and entitled to retirement. However, he remained in office until 785. Because he had served as Palace Construction Minister (zогў no kami) in 767 and 768, he may have advised Kanmu on the construction of Nagaokakyo.

The second person deserving special mention is Sakanoue no осукуне Tamuramaro who entered the State Council as imperial advisor in mid-805. The Sakanoue clan also claimed to have continental origins. In 785, Tamuramaro’s father had petitioned the throne to have his hereditary title changed from imiki into suкune. In this petition, he claimed descent from Achi no Omi, a great-grandson of Emperor Lingdi of the Later Han Dynasty. Tradition has it that when the Later Han Dynasty fell in 220, Achi no Omi first fled to Korea and then to Japan. Tamuramaro had served in various construction agencies, and his family was traditionally involved in military affairs. Tamuramaro’s father had been involved in the suppression of the rebellion of Fujiwara no Nakamaro in 764; and Tamuramaro himself fought the emishi in northern Japan on several occasions. During his last campaign in 801-802, he was finally successful in suppressing the rebellion, and most likely these military successes led to Tamuramaro’s inclusion in the State Council.

The Hinder Palace

The increased social and political importance of people from immigrant descent described above was also reflected in the composition of Kanmu’s Hinder Palace.

49. Shoku nihongi, E 9/7/17. While the entry announcing Mamichi’s name change claims Geungsu was the 16th ruler of the kingdom, reference is once more made to the solar origins of King Dongmyeong and Baekje.
50. Between 747 and 750, Fukushin and seven relatives held the hereditary title of коникиши before being given the surname and title Koma no ason. Shoku nihongi, Tenpyо 19/6/7; Tenpyо сhоhо 2/1/27.
51. Shoku nihongi, E 8/10/17.
52. Shoku nihongi, Tenpyо jingo 1/1/7.
53. Shoku nihongi, E 8/10/17.
56. Nihon shoki, ¯Ojin tennо 20/Autumn, 9th month.
57. Nihon shoki, E 8/10/17.
The women of the Kudara no konikishi family benefited greatly from Myôshin and Tsugutada’s influence as several of them were in attendance at court and they attained a higher rank than many of their male relatives during Kanmu’s and following reigns. Four women were appointed female officials: Keishin, Myôhon, Shintoku, and Shinzen, and at least four other relatives of Myôshin were selected for an even more coveted position as one of Kanmu’s consorts: Kyônin, Kyôhô, Jôkyô and Fujiwara no ason Minamiko, a granddaughter of Tsugutada and Myôshin.

In addition to the Kudara no konikishi women, other females of immigrant descent were also selected as imperial consorts and concubines.

During the first decade of his reign, Kanmu had a relationship with Kudara no sukune Nagatsugu, a woman belonging to the Asukabe no kimi family. Several Asukabe families are recorded in the Shinsen shôjiroku, and they all claimed descent from Baekje kings. Nagatsugu was originally a secondary consort of Fujiwara no Uchimaro with whom she had several children. However, in the early 780s she became a serving girl (nyojû) in the palace, and in 785 she gave birth to Yasuyo, one of Kanmu’s sons. Although Yasuyo was never recognized as an imperial prince (shinnô) he did receive the family name and hereditary title of Yoshimine no ason in 802.

In 793, Nishigoribe no muraji Manu gave birth to Imperial Prince Sakamoto. Manu, too, who was descended from Baekje royalty as the Shinsen shôjiroku, mentions two Nishigoribe no muraji branches, both claiming descent from King Chogo.

Finally, Kanmu had two consorts who belonged to the Sakanoue clan. The first, Sakanoue no osukune Matakô, was the sister of Tamuramaro. From the entry upon her death in 790, it is clear she already became one of Kanmu’s consorts before his enthronement. The second was Sakanoue no osukune Haruko, a daughter of Tamuramaro. She probably became a consort around 800, the birth year of her son with Kanmu.

This selection of women belonging to immigrant kinship groups as consorts was in fact a precedent. Although Kônin also had a
spouse of immigrant origin, this marriage had taken place decades before he became emperor during a time when nobody could foresee he would one day be enthroned. This in fact made Kanmu the first reigning emperor who created marital ties with immigrant kinship groups.66

The Kudara no Konikishi versus Other Immigrant Kinship Groups

All the above clearly shows that for some reason the Kudara no konikishi were treated differently from the other immigrant kinship groups. Although Kanmu relied upon the clan to legitimize his rule and they were intermarried with one of the most powerful aristocratic families at that time, the clan failed to see this translated into political power. Even though several of the clan’s daughters became either government officials or Kanmu’s consorts, none of the male members were admitted into the top stratum of Japanese aristocracy, although this was achieved by descendants of other immigrant clans.

Both Sugano no Mamichi and Sakanoue no Tamuramaro had probably been appointed due to their meritorious deeds in terms of scholarship and military affairs respectively, and Yamato no Iemaro due to the fact that he was a relative of the emperor. However, the Kudara no konikishi, too, were maternally related to Kanmu, moreover, a significant number of Kudara women became part of the Hinder Palace, and the clan certainly served Kanmu well in terms of religious affairs and lower level administration. Kanmu’s appreciation of the clan is further exemplified by the eternal exemption from corvée labour granted to them, a privilege not even given to the Yamato, Kanmu’s closest relatives.

This makes one suspect that the Kudara no konikishi clan occupied a unique position resulting from a different level of assimilation into Japanese society.

Analysis of the Kugyō bunin shows that membership of the State Council was restricted to men holding one of three possible hereditary titles: mahito, ason, and sukune.67 These titles were the three highest in the eight kabane system (yakusa no kabane) proclaimed by Tenmu in 684 and were not available for immigrants.68 This Kudara lineage, on the other hand, held the title of konikishi, a title given only to the descendants of the royal families of the former Baekje and Goguryeo kingdoms.69 However, by the late eighth century only one clan, the descendants of the last king of Baekje, still carried the title konikishi. The other families had been assimilated into Japanese society by applying for new surnames and accepting new hereditary titles. This naturalization by name-changing was a practice that “came to be permitted on a truly wholesale basis” in the mid-eighth century:70

Whereas there are people from Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla who have long yearned after assimilation to the sacred [i.e., naturalization], have adopted our ways and earnestly pray to be granted surnames, and it is to be permitted in every case.

However, this opportunity was never seized by the Kudara no konikishi, nor did any Japanese sovereign offer them a new name and title.

66. For several years scholars have been debating whether or not the Soga family was an immigrant family. If they were a foreign clan, Könin was not the first sovereign to marry a woman of immigrant descent and Kanmu was not the first sovereign to have foreign blood.

67. In a few cases, members of the imperial family also held a regular seat on the council, and for obvious reasons, they did not have a hereditary title. Another exception in hereditary titles can be found in the office of extra-codal advisor. In the mid-8th century both Kyôfu and his brother Nanten had been appointed extra-codal advisors despite having the title konikishi. However, this office was an honorary appointment not provided for in the codes and assigned to any official holding the Third Rank who did not have a regular seat on the council (Miller 1980, 181).


69. See Tanaka (1994, 62) for a list of families receiving the title of konikishi.

Thus, not only did the clan retain their surname, explicitly referring to the former Baekje kingdom, they also retained their title, a clear reference to their royal origins. As a result, they may have been considered to be a special class of citizens, who were not fully naturalized, nor fully assimilated into Japanese society.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Ch.)</th>
<th>(J.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aon (L)</td>
<td>朝臣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheonmyeong</td>
<td>天命</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chānagon (J.)</td>
<td>中柄</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chā jōkan (J.)</td>
<td>太政官</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>densō (J.)</td>
<td>田租</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emon no kami (J.)</td>
<td>衛門卿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gokusui no en (J.)</td>
<td>曲宴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gyōbukyō (J.)</td>
<td>刑部卿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haotian shangdī (Ch.)</td>
<td>天上帝</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hizangi (J.)</td>
<td>非常議</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jō (J.)</td>
<td>伊勢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jību no kami (J.)</td>
<td>治部卿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kahane (J.)</td>
<td>宦</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kageyushi (J.)</td>
<td>創設使</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kasihwade no kami (J.)</td>
<td>向持</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaōn jīken (J.)</td>
<td>向朝廷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaiin kyō (J.)</td>
<td>宮内卿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kūnaishī (J.)</td>
<td>宮内省</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kyaku (J.)</td>
<td>格</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mahito (J.)</td>
<td>天人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naikyū no suke (J.)</td>
<td>随勲</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naishī no kami (J.)</td>
<td>僚弁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nakatsukasa no kami (J.)</td>
<td>中務卿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyoju (J.)</td>
<td>女婿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ritsuryō (J.)</td>
<td>律令</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saeji no kami (J.)</td>
<td>小使卿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sengam no kami (J.)</td>
<td>相模卿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sahyde no kami (J.)</td>
<td>小筆卿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sangi (J.)</td>
<td>参議</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shinhō (J.)</td>
<td>親王</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shōhō (J.)</td>
<td>少極</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shōdem (J.)</td>
<td>正德</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sukune (J.)</td>
<td>宿権</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tōjō gakushi (J.)</td>
<td>東宮学士</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yakusa no kabane (J.)</td>
<td>八色の性</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zōka no kami (J.)</td>
<td>造営卿</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zōhei no kami (J.)</td>
<td>造営正</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zōheki no kami (J.)</td>
<td>造営正</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zusho no kurom (J.)</td>
<td>図書頭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zusho no suke (J.)</td>
<td>圖書勲</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>